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Golden Gate Audubon Society Newsletter

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San Francisco's Big Year

The Big Year was the unintentionally diabolical idea of Hugh Cotter, San Francisco's best owl imitator. The contest; who would see the most species in the city limits of San Francisco. The rules allowed any bird seen within a three mile limit of the shoreline. After all, the 44.6 square miles of San Francisco's mainland are surrounded on three sides by salt water.

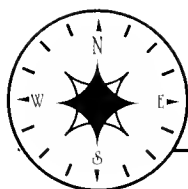
San Francisco has barely twice the area of Manhattan and a population of over 700,000 residents plus the hordes of tourists year round. There is no elevation above 1000 feet. Only one year-round surface stream. Most of the vegetation in the city is exotic. The woods consist of

eucalyptus from Australia or Monterey Pines and Cypress brought from further south in California. The beaches are heavily used for recreation. The only real lake is used for boating, fishing and skeet shooting. There is hardly an inch of land that hasn't been seriously altered by man. Sound monotonous? We rapidly learned the birds are far more widespread and adaptable than we knew. We visited some highly marginal wetlands, often surrounded by derelict piers, a power plant, abandoned cars. There were tiny willow thickets in forgotten gullies. Thickets in crowded urban parks. Beaches where people out-numbered gulls. But there were birds...and a surprising, encouraging variety.

The competition infected nine of the city's most addicted birders—Luke Cole, Hugh Cotter, Mark Eaton, Harry Fuller, Alan Hopkins, Calvin Lou, Dan Murphy, David Nelson. Starting on January 1, the first 100 species came easily enough. San Francisco and its Bay are used by wintering species from the north plus a few species up from Mexico. By the end of February the Big Year cumulative list was over 160, Alan Hopkins was in the lead, barely, but was already 22 species behind the total. Too many birds in too many places. By March 1 the species included 5 loons, 6 grebes, 20 waterfowl (including our only Eurasian Wigeon of the year), 10 raptors, 20 shorebirds, 8 gulls plus

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Field Trips Calendar

GAS field trips are conducted by experienced birders who wish to share their knowledge and love of birds with others. All trips are free of charge (except for entrance fees that may be charged by regional, state, or national parks) and are open to everyone, regardless of membership in the National Audubon Society or Golden Gate chapter.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY, JUNE 4-6, YOSEMITE'S BIRD LIFE.

See April Gull for details.
Leaders: Dave Quady (510) 704-9353 and Bob Lewis (510) 845-5001, E-mail: Rlewis0727@aol.com. \$ (*)

SATURDAY JUNE 5, SIBLEY VOLCANIC REGIONAL PRESERVE, OAKLAND.

See May Gull for details.
Leader: Jennifer Matkin (415) 681-6926, E-mail: envirolaw@aol.com

SUNDAY JUNE 6, STRYBING ARBORETUM.

See May Gull for details.
Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna (415) 566-3241.

WEDNESDAY JUNE 9, MINI-TRIP TO REDWOODS REGIONAL PARK, OAKLAND.

See May Gull for details.
Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman. \$(*)

FRIDAY JUNE 11, HAYWARD SHORELINE.

See May Gull for details.
Leader: Bob Lewis (510) 845-5001, E-mail: Rlewis0727@aol.com.

SATURDAY JUNE 12, LEONA HEIGHTS REGIONAL OPEN SPACE, OAKLAND.

See May Gull for details.
Leader: Rusty Scalf (510) 666-9936. E-mail: rscalf@jps.net.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, JUNE 19-20, YUBA PASS.

See April Gull for details.
Leader: Peter Allen (415) 892-8063. (*)

FRIDAY-SUNDAY, JUNE 25-27, LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK.

See May Gull for details.
Leaders: Dan and Joan Murphy (415) 564-0074. E-mail: murphsf@worldnet.att.net. \$(*)_

SUNDAY JULY 4, STRYBING ARBORETUM.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular 1st Sunday of the month half-day trip. The Strybing Arboretum is a delightful section of Golden Gate Park, with several "micro-habitats" attracting a varied array of resident, migrant and vagrant birds. Beginners and all others welcome. Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna (415) 566-3241.

SATURDAY, JULY 10, PRESIDIO BIRDS.

What species live in San Francisco's largest expanse of open space? Meet at 7:30 A.M. at Inspiration Point, just north of the Arguello Gate to the Presidio. We will end by 11 a.m. Bring water. We will track down the feathered residents, including the juveniles. Expect Hooded Orioles, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Pygmy Nuthatch, California Quail, possibly Elegant Tern, Heermann's Gulls, Sooty Shearwaters and Pacific Slope Flycatcher. This is an excellent trip for beginners to meet our common coastal birds. The leader will also point out fall migrant traps to help you plan your fall birding. Leader: Harry Fuller (415) 668-8229. E-mail: harry_fuller@zd.com.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, JULY 24-25, YOSEMITE ALPINE ECOLOGY.

Snow conditions at the time of this writing make selection of any specific location for this year's outing impossible. However, expect a full day's hike in the high country on Saturday, and a shorter hike, returning to our cars at about 3 p.m. on Sunday. Due to its popularity, this trip will be **by reservation only**, and the numbers participating will be strictly limited. This is not primarily a birding trip, but will emphasize general Alpine ecology. All participants should be in good physical condition, with reasonable experience in hiking and climbing at elevations of

8,000 to 11,000 feet, where we will be. Each day you should bring lunch, ample fluids, hat, water repellent jacket, sun lotion, mosquito repellent, and good walking shoes or boots with treaded soles (no smooth-soled tennis or other shoes, please). We will possibly be traversing snow fields after the heavy winter snows in the Sierra.

County and Forest Service campgrounds are located between Tioga Pass and Lee Vining off Hwy. 120 (4 to 6 miles west of Hwy. 395), as well as Tuolumne Meadows Campground in Yosemite. Motels in Lee Vining include Best Western Lakeview Lodge (760/647-6543), Gateway Motel (760/647-6767), and Murphy's Motel (760/647-6316). For trip reservations and meeting details call - Leader: George Peyton (510) 444-3131 weekdays. \$ (*).

FRIDAY - MONDAY, AUGUST 6-9, BACKPACKING TRIP IN LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK.

We will backpack in three miles to Snag Lake and spend three nights in primitive camping by a stream near a large meadow. We should see flocks of mixed warblers and other songbirds that summer in Lassen, plus resident birds of the mountains, Bald Eagles, and perhaps some migrating shorebirds. We will be above 6,000 ft elevation in beautiful country! To avoid impact in fragile habitat, this trip is **limited to 12 people**. Everyone will be responsible for his/her own gear and food, although some cooper-

Reports From Some Recent Field Trips

Cold and windy weather was the norm on most of the recent trips. **Tilden Regional Park, Nature Area**, April 18th. Leader Lew Cooper reports that this annual spring trek went well, with birds on territory and vocal, although total numbers were low. The recent cool wet weather may have put a damper on things, with little evidence of a migrant passage at this location. However, beginning birders were introduced to the songs of Wilson's and Orange-crowned Warblers, Warbling and Hutton's Vireo, Spotted Towhee, Purple Finch, Black-headed Grosbeak and others. 12 participants and 38 expected species but no California Quail, + an Amazona sp. parrot. **Sunol Regional Wilderness**, April 14th, Anna Wilcox and Jean-Marie Spoelman. A beautiful sunny day, but low in species and count numbers, although the highlight was 12 Yellow Warblers. 12 participants and 32 species. **Strybing Arboretum**, April 4th, Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna. The arboretum was closed at 8 a.m. due to wind fall danger (heavy winds the day before). The group went east and looped around the Quarry Lake area, spending the last fi hour in the arboretum. 21 participants and 42 species, including 2 California Quail. **San Francisco Bird Blitz**, Alan Hopkins, March 27th. Under windy conditions and with 20 participants to start, Alan Hopkins managed 112 species, including all 3 scoters. **Las Gallinas Sewer Ponds**, March 20th, Hugh Cotter. 16 participants and 66 species, including Eurasian Wigeon, Tufted Duck and Hooded Merganser. Always a good trip. }

ative or shared meals may be arranged. Leaders: David Rice and Robin Pulich. For details contact David Rice at (510) 527-7210 or drice@jps.net. \$(*)

SEPTEMBER 26-OCTOBER 1, SERVICE TRIP TO RAMSEY CANYON.

See May Gull for details.
Leader: Jeffrey (510) 526-7068. }

Trips marked with a (\$) go to parks or other sites which require an entrance fee. Carpooling arrangements will be attempted by leader for trips marked with a (*). Problems, etc.: If you need a ride or can take a passenger (even if a trip is not marked with an (*), if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, if you have suggestions for trips, or if you are interested in leading a trip, call Lillian Fujii (510) 256-4167, Field Trips Committee Chair.

The Latin America Committee: Something New!

by Miles McKey

GAS has for almost 8 years now recognized the problems facing migratory birds on their wintering grounds in Latin America. As we know, many species are in serious decline not only because of loss of breeding habitat, but also because of loss of wintering habitat. Thus, The Panama Committee has been trying to assist local organizations, such as Panama Audubon Society, which are struggling to save birds and their environment.

For the past several months the Panama Committee has been especially active, behind the scenes mostly. Along with its continuing support for Panama Audubon Society (for example, our recent, successful birding trip there) the committee has been discussing how best it can play an effective role. The many, urgent environmental needs in Latin America can seem just about overwhelming from a local perspective. Virtually all species must struggle against serious obstacles in trying to survive the destruction of essential habitats in Latin America. Local organizations in countries to the South of us are struggling against substantial odds to save those habitats, but those groups are small and with few resources. We believe that it is important to support them as best we can.

Thus, the committee realizes that a broader focus is needed as well as a name change that reflects the new focus. We believe Latin America Committee far better describes our committee's area



Pictured from left to right: (leaning or kneeling) Leslie Lethridge, Pat Gannon, Norita Scott Pezet (past president of Panama Audubon), Lorna Engleman, Diana Ming Chan, Lillian Fujii, and (standing left to right) Clarence Chan, Paul Kaplan, Carol, Frischmann, Steve Margolin, Renee Margolin, Gil Thomson, Steve Hayashi and Beth Hansen.

of interest and so we now have a new name! But, more important is the fact that we have made new connections in Latin America. In the next several issues of the Gull we will talk about those projects.

Finally, this seems a perfect time to change leadership. I have served as chair since inception of the committee. I feel, however, that a new chair will bring new energy and ideas. That person is Bob Risebrough. He has been an active member of the committee for several years and has wide experience in and knowledge about Latin America, both professionally and recreationally. Bob can be reached at 510-549-2476, or by email: pelecanus@igc.org. I will continue as a member and look forward to working with Bob. If you are interested in looking for ways to help us, please contact Bob.

Books For Birders

A Guide to Finding Birds in Mendocino County
by Kris K. Carter

A new comprehensive guide to birding in one of California's most scenic counties has just been published; *A Guide to Finding Birds in Mendocino County*. Written by Kris Carter, an avid Mendocino birder, the book leads you through Mendocino's seabird specialties, directs you to the avian gold in California's hills, and steers you to the summering birds of the montane forest. Highlights include 67 birding sites, 25 habitats, special birds, and a 1998 checklist.

For information on ordering, contact Kris Carter, P.O. Box 700, Albion, CA 95401 or e-mail to kkcarter@mcn.org. Her phone is 707-937-1194. The book sells for \$13.95 plus tax, shipping and handling.

Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve

By Peter Caldwell, Editor

Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve is a 293-acre site near the City of San Carlos, providing trails for hiking, biking, and walking your dog, including an off-leash area where your dog can run free. This preserve's three miles of trails offer you access to cool canyons and a ridge top with views toward the bay and surrounding hillsides.

The 1/2-mile Cordilleras Trail, designed to accommodate wheelchairs, strollers, or visitors desiring a less strenuous open space experience, parallels a road through a meadow. Near the end of the trail, a short stroll takes you to a bench located in a quiet, wooded area by Cordilleras Creek, which flows with the arrival of winter rains. Across the creek, the one-mile Polly Geraci Trail (hikers only) ascends an oak-covered hillside to the top of the preserve, where vegetation changes to chaparral, providing a great place to enjoy the view. The Polly Geraci Trail meets the paved Hassler Trail, which in turn connects to the Cordilleras Trail, creating an easy two-mile loop.

Formerly the site of the Hassler Health Home, a tuberculosis sanitarium owned by the City of San Francisco, the area was purchased by the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District in 1983. Neighbors of the preserve contributed to the acquisition when they approved a special assessment to help fund the purchase. The sanitarium was demolished in 1985 to return the land to open space. Observant visitors may see

remnants of the buildings, including rock retaining walls and steps.

Wandering the trails in the early spring, you will see many wildflowers, such as Indian warrior, hound's tongue, mule ears, and milkmaids, in addition to three members of the lily family: fetid adder's tongue, giant trillium, and mission bells. In fact, you'll find about 90 native species of trees, shrubs, ferns, flowers and **BIRDS**.

Birding Opportunities

Pulgas Ridge is also a great place to bird. On a recent trip in late March we spotted a number of birds including Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks, White-tailed Kite, Mourning Dove, Western Scrub and Steller's Jays, Anna's Hummingbird and nest, Nuttall's and Downy Woodpeckers and Northern Flicker, Black Phoebe, Common Raven, Bushtit and nests, Bewick's Wren, Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned Yellow-rumped and Townsend's Warblers, American Goldfinch, Cliff Swallow, Spotted and California Towhees, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, House Finch, Hutton's Vireo and nest. Birds heard but not seen included California Quail, California Thrasher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Chestnut-backed Chickadee.

How to get there

Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve is located in the hills above the towns of San Carlos

and Redwood City. From the intersection of I-280 and Edgewood Road, travel 0.75 miles northeast on Edgewood Road toward Redwood City. Turn left (north) on Crestview Drive, and then immediately turn left on Edmonds Road. There is limited roadside parking on Edmonds Road.

For further information

For further information about midpeninsula open space preserves, please call, write, or visit the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, 330 Distel Circle, Los Altos, CA 94022-1404. Their telephone number is 650-691-1200, and electronic mail may be sent to: mrobsd@openspace.org. Their web site is www.openspace.org.

For more information about Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve and other good spots to explore and bird in the Bay Area I highly recommend the third edition of *Peninsula Trails: Outdoor Adventures on the San Francisco Peninsula* by Jean Rusmore, Frances Spangle and Betsy Crowder. The Wilderness Press in Berkeley publishes it.

Editor's Note: If you have a favorite birding spot you would like to share with *Gull* readers please e-mail me at pcald@ibm.net with your column for publication in a future *Gull*.

Wonderful Birding in Panama

Steve Margolin

It is our first morning at the Canopy Tower Lodge. The sun has not quite risen and neither have we. Before the brain has really fired up, a familiar kind of roaring is perceived. Lion? No, wrong continent. Come on brain, you can do it. Oh, yeah. Howler monkeys!

A place where the first sounds in the morning are the roars of howler monkeys is, in a word, splendid. It also is a great beginning to a splendid birding trip to Panama for Diana Ming Chan, Clarence Chan, Carol Frischmann, Lillian Fujii, Pat Gannon, Jim Hand, Beth Hansen, Steve Hayashi, Paul Kaplan, Leslie Lethridge, Renee Margolin, Gil Thomson and me.

The Canopy Tower, originally a U.S. military radar station and now a new ecotourist lodge, sits high on Semaphore Hill overlooking the Panama Canal, and we are fortunate to begin our trip here. Most of us are up on the roof before breakfast, walking around the now radar-less dome and taking in the three hundred sixty degree view. Tropical forest surrounds the Tower, and as we are at the level of the forest canopy we take in the literally birds-eye views of Blue-grey, Palm and Plain-colored Tanagers, Green and Red-legged Honeycreepers, Blue Dacnis, Blue Cotinga and Black-cheeked Woodpecker. A non-stop monotonous call proves to be Green Shrike-Vireo. Keel-billed and Chestnut-mandibled Toucans are yelping and croaking from the forest. Lorna Engleman, our

enthusiastic and expert bird guide, Marisln Granados, the equally enthusiastic and talented representative of our tour operator, EcoTours de Panam, and the Lodge's creator, Panamanian entrepreneur Ra'l Arias de Para, have arrived and an excellent breakfast is being served, so separating yelpers and croakers will have to wait.

We use the Canopy Tower as our base for two days, birding a variety of habitats near the Canal. Panama Audubon Society members Bill Adsett, Norita Scott Pezet and Loyda Sanchez bring SUVs and help transport the group along Pipeline Road, which due to unusually rainy weather and lack of maintenance has become impassable for our bus. Great birds are everywhere we go. Some of us are overcome by jet lag and opt to stay at the Tower late in the afternoon and are treated to a crippling (thanks, Lorna, for a new birding term) view of a circling King Vulture, nearly at eye level and close. Paul has the long lens on the camera and takes the King's picture as fast as he can.

The next day we travel to Cerro Santa Rita in the foothills on the Atlantic (or Caribbean or northern) side of the Isthmus, in the province of Colón. There is a panoramic view of the Atlantic entrance to the Canal from the grounds of the Sierra Llorona Lodge. We cross the bridge over the Canal at the Gat'n Locks (during one of the brief periods when no ship is in either lock and the bridge is swung shut for vehicles

to cross) and spend the afternoon birding at Ft. Sherman and Ft. San Lorenzo. There are plenty of birds, the best of which is a Three-toed Sloth, which is crawling across the road. As we pile out of the bus to watch, Lorna picks up the sloth, carries it to the shoulder of the road and aims it in the general direction of some trees, into which it eventually climbs. Late in the afternoon we join the queue of cars waiting to recross the Canal at Gat'n. There are ships queued up, too. It is beginning to get dark and Lorna suggests we look for owls. What we find instead is a Great Potoo. It flies sorties off its perch, and when it lands it looks exactly like the broken-off end of a tree trunk. By the time the ships (was it six or seven that went through?) are out of the way so that we can head on to dinner, at least two hours have passed. The Potoo has more than made up for the wait and our very late dinner.

The following morning we drive back across the bridge at Gat'n to bird along Achioté Road. There are Red-lored Parrots, Squirrel Cuckoos, Smooth-billed Anis, White-tailed, Slaty-tailed and Violaceous Trogons, White-necked, Black-breasted and White-whiskered Puffbirds (a three puffbird morning!) and great views of the rare Spot-crowned Barbet. We cannot seem to get even a glimpse of the Golden-collared Manakins we hear snapping in the dense vegetation, but lots of us do get to see White-headed Wren, a specialty of the area.

In the afternoon, we take a short flight to Marislán's home province, Chiriquí, to explore the foothills and highlands of Fortuna and Volcán Barú.

The higher elevation, proximity to the main part of Central America and distance from South America make for a rather different avifauna at Fortuna. Instead of the larger toucans, we find the aptly named Emerald Toucanet. There are more furnariids, including Red-faced Spinetail and Spotted Barbtail. There is an American Dipper in a stream (yes, Panama is a long way to go for a bird that sometimes can be found in Alameda County, but it was a lifer for at least one person in our group, and dippers are fun to see anywhere, any time). We also see Band-tailed Pigeons, but no Comestible Pigeons. The best birds here are smaller, including Tropical Parula, Blackburnian Warbler, Slate-throated Redstart, Common Bush-Tanager and Silver-throated Tanager. A few lucky people see Golden-crowned and Three-striped Warblers.

We spend our last two days in Chiriquí in the highlands on the west side of Volcán Barú. The new Hotel Los Quetzales in the small town of Guadalupe is well located, with pleasant accommodations and great food. Its proprietor (also proprietor of the better known Cabañas Los Quetzales nearby) is Carlos Alfaro, an interesting and helpful host. Thanks to the efforts of Carlos and others, this part of Panama still has extensive areas of high elevation

rainforest, with soaring trees bedecked with orchids, bromeliads and such, home of the eponymous Quetzal.

I have longed to see a Resplendent Quetzal since as a child I first learned that such a creature existed. Our first attempt to find Quetzals yields a view that is not even remotely crippling, perhaps a two on Lorna's scale of one to five. We spend most of the rainy day birding from the decks of the Cabañas, where the looks at Magnificent Hummingbird, Violet Sabrewing (a large, purple hummer) and Yellow-thighed Finch (a rare example of a bird not named for its least distinctive feature) are wonderful. Lillian wins the best-bird-finder of the day award for a rare Black Guan, a galliform bird of the family Cracidae, which she spots sitting in a tree in the distance. The Guan is large and has uniformly black plumage, with a red eye and bright blue facial skin.

The next morning, we try for better looks at Quetzals. Same muddy trail as the day before, same fruitless searching. Just as we are about to give up, a male Quetzal lands quite nearby. Over the next I have no idea how many minutes (time really does stand still every now and then), the bird moves closer and displays every bit of his gorgeous self. We see the emerald head and back, the yellow bill, the watermelon breast and belly, the snowy tail, the feathering (scapulars, I suppose) coming down over the wing onto the sides like green fingers. He moves on his

perch and flies from tree to tree and we see those amazing, long green Dr. Seuss filamentous upper tail coverts. Fabulous. Unbelievable. Six on the Lorna scale of one to five.

We fly back to Panama City the next morning and do our last birding in the Parque Natural Metropolitano, a large park in the City that contains some rather threatened but still fine tropical forest habitat and some birds we have not seen elsewhere. We have a nice look at a Prothonotary Warbler, an "eastern" warbler and a life bird for me. Renee and Carol stay on the trail while the rest of us follow Lorna (and her husband, Dodge, who has joined us for the day) into the underbrush in search of Lance-tailed Manakin, Rosy Thrush-Tanager and some elusive wrens. Brief glimpses of these are had by some, while Carol and Renee enjoy the birds we have scared out of the woods and onto the trail.

We have returned from Panama with a trip list of over 300 species (more than that for unstoppable Jim), but more importantly with warm feelings for the Panamanians we have met and an appreciation for Panama's natural heritage and for the efforts of Panama Audubon Society and others to protect that heritage. GGAS, through its Latin America Committee, has a cooperative relationship with Panama Audubon, so watch *The Gull* for more information about Latin America and for news of the next GGAS-sponsored trip to Panama.

The Big Year

Marbled Murrelet, Summer Tanager & Cassin's Auklet (2 Hopkins' finds), Loggerhead Shrike (found first by Calvin Lou), a wintering Western Tanager, Lucy's and Prothonotary Warblers.

In addition to the dozen most-birded spots in the city, new species were turning up in a score of other spots. More birders spending more time in the field. Looking everywhere.

Word traveled quickly among the nine, often by email, occasionally by phone. The idea was for everybody to see as many as possible, so rapid reporting was a badge of honor. As the year wore on, birders from nearby counties caught the fever. One told me he couldn't bear hearing all those Bird Box reports from San Francisco without chasing all the great birds being found in the city. Helpful non-contestants found new birds for the Big Year guys and were included on the non-exclusive email list. Joe Morlan, Dan Singer, Isaiah Clark, Graham Etherington.

Here are some examples of good birds, and resulting emails.

April 10, David Nelson finds the city's first-ever Sage Sparrow, on Mt. Davidson. "Sage Sparrow makes this whole event worthwhile for me. Thanks for talking me into this madness," he wrote. Nelson had 153 species by April 10, 164 at month's end. Mark Eaton reported his total at 161. At month's end Hopkins had 172, followed by Joost Romeu with 168, David Nelson with 164. Clearly it was going to take 200 or more to win.

May 3, Luke Cole, "Although I know no one is keeping track, I managed to pick up eight city birds today." Those included returning swallows, vireos, Hooded Oriole.

Nemesis birds persisted. I never got the Semipalmated Plover. Some missed Western Kingbird. Dan Murphy, an ace birder with years of city experience, had trouble getting his Steller's Jays, a bird not often seen in the city recently.

May 23, Murphy: "[Got a black] Black Kittiwake...[then] I went to Fort Scott in the Presidio in search of the alleged Steller's Jays. As always I missed them." [He did finally score on those jays.] End of month leaders: Hopkins with 193, Romeu with 184, Calvin Lou with 176.

June 3, Mark Eaton: "There are few eastern wood warblers of which I am confident of identifying by sound, but Ovenbird is one of them." A great city bird.

June 7, Luke Cole: "This evening at Lincoln Park from 7-8 was an amazing spectacle, as perhaps 8,000 to 12,000 Sooty Shearwaters cruised in and out of the Golden Gate...and to think how hard I worked for that one damned Sooty...just yesterday." In late summer the Sooty temporarily becomes San Francisco's most numerous species.

June 21, Alan Hopkins: "There were Gadwalls on Mallard Lake with one chick. This may be the first record for breeding Gadwall in S.F."

June 22, Hopkins: "Still two short of 200." That had been everybody's unspoken goal. I really

want to reach the magic 200 level. It was clearly going to happen, but not be enough to win. What would fall migration bring?

July 14, Hopkins: "Does my Yellow-throated Vireo have to pass CBRC before I can count it? It could take years...."

Despite summer doldrums, at the end of July Hopkins had his 200, Romeu 190, Hugh Cotter 188.

September 1, Hopkins has added Northern Fulmar, Sabine's Gull and Pink-footed Shearwater on a pelagic trip. Now he's well past 200.

September 7, Mark Eaton: "Northern Waterthrush at Middle Lake this morning...it might be thinking about wintering as it's been here since 8/25..."

At Fort Funston he reported Marbled Murrelet, Black-vented Shearwater and Pomarine Jaeger.

Joe Morlan: "We got excellent views of the Prairie warbler in the shrubs and trees...along South Park Drive."

Harry Fuller: "Best bird of the day: ACORN WOODPECKER AT EAST WASH!" I was excited, it was one of my many city lifers for the year. Calvin Lou had an Acorn the same day in another part of the city.

September 11, Stephen Davies describes an exotic and then asked, "Bee-eater?"

Hugh Cotter's reply, "Sounds like you had the Leafbird sp. which I did see previously in June. Leafbird is a SE Asian species & highly non-migratory." It was ruled an escapee by Hug, Green-tailed Towhee, Acorn Woodpecker.

September 15, Alan Hopkins

listed his new birds for the month, just before leaving for a birding trip to Africa. He had added his city lifer Green-tailed Towhee which almost cost him his scope. He nearly knocked it down the hill in an excited gesture when the towhee came into view.

September 21, Luke Cole, Josiah Clark, Ivan Samuels and I do a big day in San Francisco as part of PRBO birdathon. We get a city record 114, including a Tennessee Warbler Josiah calls out of some obscure willow patch. Another city lifer for me.

September 26, Mark Eaton: "Rather remarkable day....Cape May Warbler...Sabine's Gull ...Common Tern...Prairie Falcon...Broad-winged Hawk...Vaux's Swift."

September 30, David Nelson listed his new birds for the month, 36 ... putting his total at 217 for the year. What would it take to win this? What could be left to see?

Other good birds added by the group in September: Palm, Black-throated Blue and Blackburnian Warblers, Least and Gray Flycatchers, Vesper Sparrow.

By September's end the leadership had changed and totals leaped ahead. Hopkins was gone for half the month. Cotter 230, Romeu 226, Hopkins 223, Lou 221, Eaton 220. And the race remained close to the final day.

October brought Tropical Kingbird and the final White-throated Sparrow of the year. The biggest miss of the year was a pair of failed attempts at a pelagic trip, each killed by bad weather. Possibly some ocean birds would

have been added though the list already included six alcids and three jaegers and the Blue-footed Booby.

As the year wound down Dan Murphy spotted an Orchard Oriole, a city lifer after three decades of San Francisco birding. In the final week a Ross's Goose was grazing on the crowded Marina Green, dodging joggers. Then the Christmas Bird Count turned up a Black-necked Stilt, absent all year from the city though a nearby breeder and resident. The action never stopped. December 31 saw most of the Big Year guys out looking for those final birds. I added my Baltimore Oriole that day. #210 to finish in the top ten, rather ninth place among nine contestants.

The Big Year had uncovered some fine birding spots not known before, turned up birds like the Steller's Jay, Rock Wren, Wrentit and Cooper's Hawk which are unusual breeding species in San Francisco. There was a migrating Townsend Solitaire on a hill under 800 feet high, but somehow the Red Crossbills did not appear and were missed by most. And there were the mysteries not credited to the list: a strange sparrow that may have been a hybrid, the maile Ringed Teal (*Callonetta leucophrys*) that showed up in Golden Gate Park (from the zoo?), the possible skua Dan Murphy had at Crissy Field, the Leafbird, of course, and the raucous flock of parakeets that inhabit Telegraph Hill and the Presidio (*Aratinga erythrogenys*) and a Ringed Teal in Golden Gate Park (perhaps a zoo

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Clapper Rail Circle

(\$100 or more)

Joelle Buffa, Joyce and John Davis

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In Memoriam: The Gull

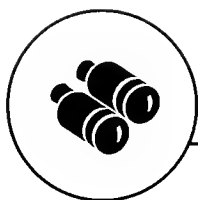
recently noted a gift in memory of Kathy Plamondon. Her name was inadvertently misspelled. We regret the error.

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escapee). The final standings:

Alan Hopkins	243
(without his vireo)	
Hugh Cotter	241
Mark Eaton	241
Joost Romeu	240
David Nelson	234
Calvin Lou	232
Dan Murphy	228
Luke Cole	226
Harry Fuller	210

The cumulative species total were 280. Two new city birds: Sage Sparrow, Cape May Warbler. Prairie Falcon and Long-tailed Jaeger were only second sightings in S.F.



March 27 - April 26 1999

Wintery weather continued into the first week of April, with cold temperatures, blustery onshore winds, rain on the coast, snow on the coastal mountains, and abundant snowfall in the Sierras. Mid-month, several days of offshore flow brought warmer temperatures and a burst of wildflower displays. The rest of the period was changeable, with warm, spring-like periods interspersed with cold, windy days and a little mountain snow. Despite the inconsistencies, courting and nesting activities abounded, providing great pleasure to birders.

Loons to Ducks.

The wintering **Yellow-billed Loon** (*Gavia adamsii*), last reported Feb. 17 was seen again Mar. 27 off Esplanade Park, Pacific Grove, MTY (MPRBA). Six Red-necked appeared in alternate plumage at Bodega Harbor mouth, SON, Mar. 29 (DN). One Laysan Albatross was seen at the Cordell Banks on a Mar. 29 Pelagic trip (DN), but the Point

Arena bird was not reported during the period, and may have already departed. Forty-to-fifty Black-footed Albatross were also seen on the Mar. 29 voyage (DN). Another Black-footed Albatross was blown near Pt. Pinos, MTY, Apr. 3 (MPRBA) and 25-30 more were found on an Apr. 25 MTY pelagic trip (DLSh). An Apr. 7 trip in MTY bay reported a probable dark-morph Murphy's Petrel (MPRBA).

One Pink-footed Shearwater was sighted from Pigeon Pt., SM, Apr. 3 (RT), and 30 were found on an Apr. 25 MTY Bay pelagic trip (DLSh). High winds Apr. 3 at Pt. Pinos, MTY, blew thousands of Sooty Shearwaters, many Short-tailed Shearwaters, and one Black-vented Shearwater near shore (MPRBA). Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels, usually seen off the coast during the summer, were found in HUM Co., with one-to-five at seen at North Jetty, HUM, Mar 31-Apr. 1 (Morris, Nelson), and 3-10 at Crescent City, HUM, Apr. 4-10 (B). Another Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel was found wrecked in Pacifica, SM, Apr. 3 and later died (SP). Four Pelagic Cormorants on West Brothers Island, CC, Apr. 24 were at their only known E. Bay nesting site (SG).

Three coastal Ross's Geese were found: one at Lakeville Dairy, another at Lucchesi Park, SON, Mar. 29 (DN), and an injured bird at College Lake, SCZ, Apr. 23 (RW). One of the endangered Aleutian race of Canada Geese was near Petaluma, SON, Apr. 3 (AW). Seven reports of single Eurasian Wigeons came from ALA, MRN, and HUM counties. A male Tufted Duck continued at Las Gallinas Sanitary Ponds, MRN, Mar. 27 (GN). A Harlequin Duck continued in

Monterey Harbor, MTY, Mar. 28 (MPRBA), there were two at Crescent City, HUM, Apr. 4,6 (B), and one at Brooks Island, CC, Apr. 24 (SG). The inland White-winged Scoter first reported Dec. 25 remained at Pacific Hts. Rd., BUT, Mar. 28 (RR). An Oldsquaw continued at the Berkeley Marina, ALA, Mar. 26-Apr. 4 (GF, MR, MOB), another was at Bodega Harbor, SON, Apr. 5 (SC), and three were reported from Bodega Bay, SON, Apr. 11 (LL). A male and female Oldsquaw were across from Hole-in-the-Head, Bodega, SON, Apr. 19 (CV), and there was a female on the Pajaro River, SCZ, Apr. 24 (RW). Three Hooded Mergansers were still around, one at Las Gallinas Sanitary Ponds, MRN, Mar. 28 (GN), another in the Lily Pond, SF, Apr. 2 (EW), and a third at Harkins Slough, SCZ, Apr. 24 (RW).

Raptors to Murrelets.

One immature Broad-winged Hawk flew over the bay at Redwood Shores, SM, Apr. 14 (RT). An unusual location for a report of a Prairie Falcon was over a baseball game at 3-Com Park, SF, Apr. 22 (MB). A basic-plumaged American Golden-Plover was at Coyote Point Co. Park, SM, Apr. 10-16, (RT, HH, BR). One Pacific Golden-Plover was seen at the Eel River delta, HUM, Apr. 13 (M). Six Solitary Sandpipers, rare but regular spring migrants, were reported at 6 locations: at Smith Creek Fire Station, SCL, Apr. 18 (AE), at a marsh at Argyle and Jolon Rds., MTY, Apr.18-19 (MPRBA), in the Guadalupe R., SCL, Apr. 24 (JM), at Elkhorn Slough, MTY, Apr. 25 (RS, AA), at Stockton Sewage Ponds, SJ, Apr. 25 (LL), and at Orick, HUM, Apr. 25 (P). A Stilt Sandpiper was seen at Arcata Bottoms, HUM, Apr. 13 (I). Many

Abbreviations for Observers: AA, Albany Adult School Birding Class; KA, Ken Archibaud; B, Barron; FB, Florence Bennett; MB, Marj Bourret; DB, Debbi Brusco; JB, Joelle Buffa; KB, Ken Burton; LC, Les Chibana; RC, Rich Cimino; SC, Suzanne Cogan; AE, Al Eisner; GE, Graham Etherington; GF, George Finger; DF, David Fix; MG, Marie Geiger; SG, Steve Glover; KG, Kevin Guse; SH, Steve Hampton; HH, Hugh Harvey; I, Irwin; LL, Leslie Lieurance; MOB, Many Observers; JM, John Mariana; M, McAllister; PM, Peter Metropulos; Mo, Morris; GN, Gary Naefus; N, Nelson; DN, Dan Nelson; SP, Sue Pemberton; P, Power; CP, Cathy Purchess; RR, Richard Redmond; BR, Bob Reiling; MR, Mike Rogers; RS, Rusty Scalf; DLSh, Debra Love Shearwater; T, Teitz; RT, Ron Thorn; JT, Jim Tietz; CV, Catherine Vega; EW, Ed Walsh; AW, Alan White; RW, Roger Wolfe; DW, Dennis Wolff; DY, David Yee; (first names not available for some HUM Co. observers).

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; BSOL, Big Sur Ornithology Laboratory; BUT, Butte; CC, Contra Costa; HUM, Humboldt; LAS, Lassen; MRN, Marin; MTY, Monterey; MPRBA, Monterey Peninsula Rare Bird Alert; SAC, Sacramento; SBT, San Benito; SF, San Francisco; SJ, San Joaquin; SM, San Mateo; SCL, Santa Clara; SCZ, Santa Cruz; SON, Sonoma; STA, Stanislaus; YOL, Yolo.

Red-necked Phalaropes were among the birds blown toward land at Pt. Pinos, MTY, Apr. 3 (MPRBA), and 275 were counted from a boat on MTY Bay Apr. 25 (DLSh).

Rare Gulls seem to have been duplicating themselves during the period. The immature Franklin's Gull reported last month continued at Stockton Sewage Ponds, SJ, Apr. 2 (GE), but on Apr. 18, there were TWO immature birds present (DY). Yet another Franklin's Gull was at the Carmel R. mouth, MTY, Apr. 20 (MPRBA). The adult **Little Gull** (*Larus minutus*) originally reported on Mar. 15 continued at Stockton Sewage Ponds, SJ, but on Apr. 18, there were TWO present, the adult and a second-winter bird (DY). Both birds remained as of Apr. 25 (AE, GE, KB, MOB). Eleven Glaucous Gulls were seen over ALA, HUM, SM, and SCZ counties, with a high count of five birds off Fremont Ave., ALA, Mar. 27 (MR). Many hundreds of Black-legged Kittiwakes were among the birds driven ashore by high winds Apr. 3 at Pt. Pinos, MTY, even so far as Robert's Lake, Laguna Grande, and in MTY Harbor (MPRBA). Black-legged Kittiwakes numbering 2250 flew north past Pigeon Point, SM, Apr. 13, others were seen at the mouth of Pilarcitos Creek, SM (RT), and several other smaller groups were found on the coast in various SM and MTY county locations during the period. Two Arctic Terns were spotted on the Apr. 25 MTY Bay pelagic trip Apr. 25 (DLSh). Elkhorn Slough, MTY, had a single Black Skimmer during the first week of April (MPRBA). Two Ancient Murrelets, somewhat uncommon in late April, were sighted on the Apr. 25 MTY Bay pelagic trip (DLSh).

Owls to Grackles.

A Barred Owl was reported in Prairie Creek State Park, HUM, Apr. 12 and two were there on Apr. 20 (DF). This species is a very rare resident not reported in CA until 1981 (Small, 1994). Two male Black-chinned Hummingbirds were found at a feeder at a private campground near the Pinnacles, SBT, Apr. 19 (LC). A male Costa's Hummingbird, recently listed as endangered in California by the National Audubon Society, was in its normal locale in Del Puerto Canyon, STA, Apr. 17 (FB).

Only a few sightings of migrating *Empidonax* flycatchers were reported, seemingly in lower numbers than previous years for the period. A Hammond's Flycatcher was at Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo State Park, CC, Apr. 15-24 (SG, JT), and another was seen at Prairie Creek State Park, HUM, Apr. 15 (DF). A Gray Flycatcher was in San Carlos, SM, Apr. 15 (RT), and a Dusky Flycatcher was at BSOL in early April (MPRBA). A Cassin's Kingbird was at an unusual coastal location at Coyote Point Co. Park, SM, Apr. 25 (RT). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher appeared near Kirby Park, MTY, Apr. 6 (MPRBA). BSOL recorded its first Cassin's Vireo of the season on Mar. 30 (MPRBA). The first Bank Swallow of the spring for Ano Nuevo State Reserve, SM, arrived Mar. 28 (PM). One male Phainopepla was in an unusual coastal location near Don Castro Regional Recreation Area, ALA, Apr. 22 (DB fide LC). Rare Wood Warblers were slow to arrive (see Chart), but there were many singing Common Yellowthroats, Wilson's, and Orange-crowned Warblers to celebrate the spring.

A Green-tailed Towhee was reported from Belmont Hills, SM,

Wood Warbler Sightings

Nashville Warbler		
Apr. 15	Mitchell Canyon, Mt. Diablo S.P., CC	SG
Apr. 20	Castle Rock, Mt. Diablo S.P., CC	KA
Palm Warbler		
Mar. 30,	Arcata Marsh, HUM	T
Apr. 8		
Apr. 8	Coyote Point Co. Park, SM	RT
Black-and-white Warbler		
Mar. 27	ALA Flood Control Channel, ALA	JB
Northern Waterthrush		
Mar. 30,	Arcata Marsh, HUM	T
Apr. 11		

Apr. 12 (RT). A Clay-colored Sparrow continued at San Bruno Community Gardens, SM, Mar. 28, 30 (RT, BR) A female Lark Bunting was near Oat Creek, YOL, Apr. 12, 15 (SH, KG). Rather early were 6 Grasshopper Sparrows in Del Puerto Canyon, STA, Apr. 17 (FB). Another Grasshopper Sparrow was found on Rd. 12A, YOL, Apr. 15 (KG). At least 7 White-throated Sparrows were seen over ALA, CC, HUM, and SF counties, with 8 birds at Discovery Park, SAC, Mar. 28 (MG). Gazos Creek, SM, hosted two Lapland Longspurs Apr. 3 (RT).

A Blue Grosbeak was found at Patterson Pass Rd., ALA, Apr. 20 and 24 (RC), and another was at Ed Levin Park, SCL, Apr. 25 (MR). An alternate-plumaged female Rusty Blackbird was seen near Honey Lake, LAS, Apr. 4 (JT). This extremely rare spring transient nests mainly in Canada, summers in the SE, and migrates through the Eastern U.S. There was an unconfirmed report of a **Common Grackle** (*Quiscalus quiscula*) from the Antioch Bridge, CC, Apr. 17 (SG). Last but not least, a Great-tailed Grackle posed on the roof of the Hayward Regional Shoreline interpretive center, ALA, Apr. 14-17 (CP fide DW).

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